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Great Basin National Park News Release

Release Date: Immediate
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Phone Number: (775) 234-7331
Date: August 13, 2010

Great Basin National Park First Annual Astronomy Festival

Almost a thousand visitors celebrated some of the darkest skies in the country by attending Great Basin National Park's first annual Astronomy Festival August 6 through 8. Visitors participated in daytime and nighttime events which covered the many different topics of astronomy and night sky protection. These events included telescope viewing, astronomy presentations, solar viewing, kids programs, music, art, and literature.

The astronomy festival was co-sponsored by the National Parks and Conservation Association. The park enlisted the help of the Salt Lake Astronomical Society and the Las Vegas Astronomical Society, as well as astronomers from local and faraway communities to provide over 40 telescopes for park visitors to gaze at planets, stars, nebulae, galaxies, and other amazing deep sky objects. These 30 volunteers provided interpretation, education, and entertainment to all who looked through the telescopes.

Keynote speaker William L. Fox examined the many different aspects to understanding our night sky. He spoke of the similarities that exist between the scientific astronomical community and the humanities, and how humanities can preserve the legacy of scientific discovery and understanding.

Paul Bogard, author and editor, of "Let There Be Night: Testimonies on Behalf of the Dark" also contributed to the weekend's program with a talk and workshop. Bogard spoke of the importance of night sky protection and how advocacy and testament works to further education of the importance of the night sky to people's spiritual and physical needs.

Great Basin National Park has placed a new emphasis on expanding its night sky viewing and night sky protection programs. The Great Basin National Park Foundation's recently donated new 11 inch Schmidt-Cassegrain telescope gave hundreds of visitors their first glimpse through a telescope.

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